



# POWER ON THE INSIDE

Why Incarcerated Lives Matter to  
the Black Lives Matter Movement

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[ItsGoingDown.org](http://ItsGoingDown.org)



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*This essay was informed by hours of conversation with experienced prison rebels which has been invaluable to the author's awareness and analysis. He is also grateful to outside organizers for feedback and friendship.*

*Free all prisoners.  
Destroy Prison Society.  
Defend Black Lives.  
Liberation for All.*

Power on the Inside

Why Incarcerated Lives Matter  
to the Black Lives Matter Movement

By Ben Turk  
August 2016

*Caveat: I am a 37 year old man who has been some kind of radical for all of my adult life. I've participated as a white ally in the Black Lives Matter movement. My involvement with that movement has been standard allyship, (calling out racists, joining marches, attending workshops, etc) but I have been deeply involved in prisoner resistance struggles for the last six years, working daily to amplify and make present prisoner's voices and resistance actions. From this position of privilege and allyship, but also these deeper commitments to prison rebels, I'm offering this strategic appeal to the Black Lives Matter movement, its allies, and anyone who cares to pursue a radical opposition to American white supremacy. I do not expect the critical aspects of this appeal to go unchallenged, and I offer it with abiding respect and an ardent desire to see all our struggles advance.*

*“If you're not talking about violence, hurting people or hurting their pocketbooks, then you're not talking about nothing!”*

- Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan  
Ohio State Penitentiary  
23 years in solitary confinement

The white establishment in America has survived many attempts to dismantle it. Black Lives Matter is currently fighting a system that survived enormous mass movements in the 1960s as well as the American Civil War. Each fight hurts the system, some fundamentally transforming it, but white supremacy has also learned from these near defeats and each new form has been more covert, sophisticated and more deeply embedded. Over the centuries, one thing has always been true: white supremacy is stubborn, persistent and mean.

Our struggles against white supremacy have proven Frederick Douglass' oft repeated adage, that “power concedes nothing without a demand” to be insufficient. The full truth is that power concedes nothing without a fight; without a demand backed by force. If the present struggle fails, I believe it will be because of this insufficiency: Black Lives Matter's demands don't leverage power. I am writing to suggest that Black Lives Matter gain power by connecting with the resurgent Prisoner Resistance movement.

Resistance to prison society is bound up with Black Lives Matter. It is a struggle of disproportionately non-white people

in and exercise power<sup>39</sup>. We live in such a twisted society that a prison has become one of the best places to fight. The fortunate thing is that the prisoners are already at it, but they shouldn't have to do it alone.

September 9 is the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infamous Attica Uprising<sup>40</sup>. On that day this year, prisoners are going to take action with, or without robust support of the supposedly free world. When they do, they will rock departments of correction across the country, but, if the rest of the Black community, if all the white allies, if every anti-racist organization were to step up and have their backs, it would do much more than that. Alone, the prisoners have a crowbar with which to take a crack at their confinement, but, together, Black Lives Matter can put enough muscle behind that lever to rock the white establishment to its very roots.

In 2016, America needs the same thing it needed in 1859 when John Brown and 20 accomplices rode on Harpers Ferry; America needs a slave revolt. I am writing on behalf of prison rebels who are looking for accomplices, asking you: will Black Lives Matter will join the rebellion?

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39 “Today's prison further resembles the ghetto for the simple reason that an overwhelming majority of its occupants originate from the racialized core of the country's major cities, and returns there upon release, only to be soon caught again in the police dragnet to be sent away for another, longer sojourn behind bars in a self-perpetuating cycle of escalating socioeconomic marginality and legal incapacitation.” - LoicWaquant, *Deadly symbiosis: When ghetto and prison meet and mesh in Punishment & Society*, Jan 2001.

40 See [From Attica to Pelican Bay...](#) by Bryan Gerhart for Colorlines July 27, 2011 and an 8 minute [documentary film trailer](#) at AtticaTheFilm.com

strikes. We have come to realize, that, as far as risk is concerned, prisoners swim in it. As a result, all of the retaliation, however brutal is actually less powerful. In prison the tools of repression are rolled out for petty offenses: giving a guard the side eye, stepping out of line or 'off the wall' or being late for breakfast. When convicts find the capacity to act in a unified way in spite of these punishments, the prison authorities target leaders for either infraction board rulings to send them to higher security levels, or outside courts to pile new charges unto their sentences, often using nothing but snitch testimony extracted from people threatened with the same penalties if they don't lie on the perceived leaders.

Whenever prisoners stand up, they get thrown in solitary confinement, sometimes indefinitely. Many of the leaders are already there, and housing them costs the state massive amounts of money. There are simply not enough solitary cells or enough money in the system to permanently lock down hundreds or thousands of captives when they refuse direct orders to go to work. Many correctional officers may be quick to violence by disposition, but others react this way because they don't have other options. In a democratic society, where legitimacy is key, beating a handcuffed person with a hammer is a net loss for the white establishment, a display of weakness and a concession of power.

If we want to end police brutality and terrorism, if we want to wrench real concessions from the white supremacy, we cannot merely protest. We cannot merely talk about race and appeal to the conscience of the oppressor. We need more than a demand. We have to hit them in their pocketbooks or their bodies. It is a harsh truth, but the white establishment understands no other language. The tough reality that accompanies that harsh truth is that, in the life-cycle of low-income Black communities, where police terror churns people from poverty to criminality, from the streets to prison and back again there are precious few opportunities to dig

facing down systemic abuse, torture, violence and murder at the hands of the police, prison guards and the criminal legal system. This movement does not yet have our nation's attention, but it does have a kind of leverage which Black Lives Matter lacks.

I mean no disrespect to Black Lives Matter. I am proud and grateful to be living in a time of unrest, rather than pacification. I owe that to Black Lives Matter more than anything else. The education, propaganda, disruptions and awareness-raising that Black Lives Matter has brought is invaluable. Every hashtag, online rant, freeway shut down, and conversation about race in America has power and advances the cause, but we can't pretend such things will win the day alone.

The enemies of racial justice have evolved and multiplied. We live in an age when the openly, virulently racist reactionary and the pacifying pandering liberal take turns reproducing a white supremacist order in America. Black Lives Matter confronts these forces. It erodes the excuses of unconscious participants in systemic racism. It forces us to take sides, and puts guilty white liberals through great contortions of allyship, training them to notice microaggressions and check their privilege, which is excellent, but insufficient. Even the best trained liberal ally is unlikely to recognize or participate in material acts of interracial solidarity.

Material acts are necessary. American history contains a constant litany of reminders that there has been no successful advance for human rights, racial justice, or serious departure from the founding traditions of genocide and slavery without significant helpings of political violence and economic coercion against the racist status quo. The Civil Rights movement needed Malcolm X and the Watts riots no less than it needed Dr Martin Luther King.<sup>1</sup>

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1 "I'll tell you what: I never let a riot slide by. I'm always the first one down at city hall and testifying before Congress, tellin' 'em, "See? If you guys'd been dealing with us all along, this never would have happened." It gets results, man. Like nothin' else, y'know? The thing is that Rap Brown and the Black Panthers are just about the best things that ever happened to the Civil Rights

Black Lives Matter needed Ferguson and Baltimore to break through the myth of post-racial America. A rarely repeated fact from the earliest days of this movement is that Floridians were taking pot-shots at police cruisers before George Zimmerman was indicted for killing Trayvon Martin.<sup>2</sup>

This history presents an incredibly challenging prospect for Black Lives Matter and any movement rooted in poor communities, because the necessary economic leverage and militant opposition are harder to mount than ever before. Since the Black Power movement, and especially since the Cold War, the establishment has deepened its control over the United States for the purpose of preserving capitalist democracy at home and imperialism abroad through the use of a strategy known as “full-spectrum dominance.” This strategy is based on the total control of an enemy through domination of not only the physical space, but also the economy, communications technology, ideology, culture and psychological resources.

Full spectrum dominance has been adopted and advanced against any threat, including Black Lives Matter and urban revolts like Ferguson. It manifests in physical space through broken windows policing, zero tolerance policies, increased reliance on SWAT teams and military equipment, supermax prisons and cops with a de facto license to kill<sup>3</sup>. The common objective of these institutions is to neutralize communities of resistance and liberatory leaders before they have a chance to present a serious challenge to the status quo. Modern warfare has “become

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Movement.” William Jackson (organizer with MLK) quoted in [Pacifism as Pathology](#) by Ward Churchill. Also see [Chapter 3](#) of *How Non-Violence Protects the State* by Peter Gelderloos.

- 2 The squad car was shot on April 10, Zimmerman was arrested on April 11, after six weeks of non-violent protests yielded no results. See ABC News report [Police Car Shot Up in Trayvon Martin's Neighborhood](#) April 10, 2012.
- 3 Hardt and Negri have written extensively about this in their trilogy *Empire*. They argue that what “is specific to our [post-industrial] era...is that war has passed from the final element of the sequences of power--lethal force as a last resort--to the first and primary element, the foundation of politics itself....The constant and coordinated application of violence...becomes the necessary condition for the functioning of discipline and control.”

shared meals with them, eating processed and packaged sandwiches from vending machines that upset my stomach and taste like rubber and chemicals, but are the best food they'll get until their next visit, or their freedom. They tell me that when you live every day in circumstances of trauma that few on the outside could endure you either break and die inside or find astonishing reserves of strength within yourself<sup>34</sup>. Those who survive have the will to act decisively against the establishment, and they need every bit of it.

A work stoppage is far from a risk-free action, there is always retaliation. In Georgia, correctional officers beat prisoners with hammers when they went on strike to protest conditions in 2010<sup>35</sup>. In Alabama, guards attempted to starve prisoners<sup>36</sup>. At the time of this writing, Wisconsin DOC is shoving tubes down the noses of prisoners to try and break their hunger strike<sup>37</sup>. Prisons routinely use isolation, pepper spray, cattle prods, and mace to control people. They pull prisoners out of their cells, cut off all of their clothes and tie them to restraint chairs or table in excruciating positions for hours at a time.

These stories terrify those of us who are helping coordinate the strike from the outside. We're afraid because we don't have enough strength to protect people from such violence. We always move cautiously, taking care to not pressure or even encourage prisoners to action. Instead, we're reeling with how often the prisoners jump into direct action as soon as we show up. Before we can talk about strategy or caution, before we can even get the September 9 call to action<sup>38</sup> past mailroom censors, they're setting their own, much sooner dates for work stoppages or a hunger

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- 34 For a glimpse into long term solitary confinement, please watch [Our Voices are Rarely Heard](#) from [Sister](#) on Vimeo.com
  - 35 See [Video of Georgia Guards...](#) by Mary Ratcliff in San Francisco Bay View, August 29, 2016
  - 36 See [Striking Prisoners in Alabama Accuse Officials of Using Food as Weapon](#) by Alice Speri, for The Intercept, May 10, 2016
  - 37 See [Judge refuses to halt force feeding...](#) by Dee Hall for WisconsinWatch.org July 14, 2016
  - 38 Read it at [SupportPrisonerResistance.net](#)

every prison rebel I know, were inspired by the revolutionary movements of the 60s and 70s. Not everyone has had the privilege of a live mentor like Mafundi, but the written words of Huey Newton, Assata Shakur, George Jackson and others circulate through prisons like hot embers, igniting small fires everywhere they go.

Prisoner Resistance and Black Lives Matter are complementary movements. The latter dominates the media, but can't get hold of material impacts, while the other harnesses direct action, but has gone largely unnoticed. Prisoner Resistance has been hidden, but in Georgia<sup>27</sup>, in California<sup>28</sup>, in Wisconsin<sup>29</sup>, Texas<sup>30</sup>, Ohio<sup>31</sup> and Alabama<sup>32</sup>, it has been rising in a wave of protests, paralleling Black Lives Matter's action in the streets. These prisoners have watched Ferguson and Baltimore burn, they've spoken with great admiration for the struggle on the outside, and longed to participate<sup>33</sup>.

Prisoners are also resilient, they have to be. Once the state has put someone in prison, especially for long sentences at high security levels with no hope of parole, there is little more it can take away. I have close friends who have spent years in that position, watching Black Lives Matter from solitary confinement cells they have lived in for decades. For the last six years I have been working closely with guys in supermax prisons, smart, amazing, powerful and inspiring people, mostly Black men. I've

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27 See [GA Prisoner Strike Continues...](#) by Bruce A Dixon for Black Agenda Report Dec 11, 2010

28 See [Largest hunger strike in history...](#) from the SF Bay View, July 7, 2014

29 See [Wisconsin prison officials begin force feedings...](#) by Dee Hall for WisconsinWatch.org June 23, 2016

30 See [Tipping Point in Texas...](#) at IWOC.noblogs.org April 16, 2016

31 See [OSP Hunger Strike Enters Third...](#) LucasvilleAmnesty.org March 30, 2015

32 See above articles and [FreeAlabamaMovement.com](#)

33 A few examples of prisoner's writings about Black Lives Matter: [Never Domant on Death Row](#) by Siddique Abdullah Hasan and Keith LaMar, available on LucasvilleAmnesty.org [Hands Up—Don't Shoot](#) by Jalil Muntaqim, available at freejalil.com, and a collection of writings by North Carolina prisoners at [prisonersonferguson.wordpress.com](#).

virtually indistinguishable from police activity,” and police activity increasingly resembles the activity of soldiers operating as an occupying force amid a hostile general population.

Economically, in our post-industrial age the ruling class needs different things from those who it oppresses. Present day capitalism is based on eroding wage gains and benefits by downsizing, outsourcing, and transferring the workforce to temporary, unstable, and flexible forms of employment. The role of the poor in this form of capitalism is increasingly as a surplus population.<sup>4</sup>

Capitalism has always needed a “reserve army of labor” who are kept desperate enough to accept worse jobs at lower wages, but today that reserve is overflowing. We have reached a point where people are so under-employed that they celebrate whatever meager job they get, and beg for more. The pandering politician no longer has to promise high wages and good benefits. A job, any job will suffice for those who face criminalization and police terror as their only alternative to wage exploitation. What are the politicians who promise these jobs really offering? They are offering to take advantage of us. They are only promising to consider us exploitable, rather than disposable.

This is a new era for anti-black racism. When Harriet Tubman escaped slaves on the underground railroad, she was stealing vitally necessary property from plantation owners. When SNCC organized boycotts and sit-ins they withheld Black consumer power from segregationists. When Martin Luther King Jr called the sanitation worker's strike in Memphis, he was withdrawing needed Black labor from the white establishment. Opponents of the establishment today don't have these tactical options. A demand for jobs cannot be won by a strike. The struggle against poverty and insolvency cannot be won by boycott. Jobless people living on

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4 For a reflections on personally experiencing the concept of surplus population please read the essay [Crime and Punishment](#) by Keith LaMar at LucasvilleAmnesty.org Dec29, 2011

debt and government assistance because of systemic racism simply do not have much labor or purchasing power to wield. Capitalism has evolved to a point where people in general are increasingly unnecessary. Meanwhile, white supremacy continues to determine which people are most often subject to disposal. In this context, the killer cops Black Lives Matter opposes truly are just doing their job: they are taking out the disposable population.

Our white establishment is also a democracy, which only makes it more robust. Democracy is the most sophisticated system of governmental control in the world. A democratic government enables full spectrum dominance on an ideological, cultural and psychological level. Democracies can attack through distraction, manipulation, and false promises, as well as the old fashioned tools of terror and violence. It can pander to us, bog us down in slow legal and policy-making processes, and when that doesn't work, it can still shoot us. One of Black Lives Matter's many virtues is that most participants seem to understand this. The movement refuses to endorse political candidates and wisely keeps their activities in the streets<sup>5</sup>.

Democracies gain power through legitimacy. They only use violence and authoritarian methods against those who they have first criminalized. This is how the United States can both front as the bastion of freedom and incarcerate more of its citizens than anywhere else. Black Lives Matter has exposed this reality, reminding us that in addition to the lies, indoctrination and propaganda, the government also pays cops to kill people every day. Meanwhile, what Prisoner Resistance teaches us, is that

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5 "While voting certainly matters, particularly in local municipalities like Ferguson, movement members are clear that voting for policies and politicians whose ultimate goal is to maintain a rotten and unjust system is counterproductive. Thus the movement cares about national politics, and many participants have sought to make presidential candidates responsive to their political concerns. However, there is deep skepticism about whether the American system is salvageable, because it is so deeply rooted in ideas of racial caste." - [11 Major Misconceptions About the Black Lives Matter Movement](#) at BlackLivesMatter.com accessed July 29, 2016

most intense forms of repression, but they also have more economic leverage than any existing liberatory social movement in this country.

When prisoners go on strike, correctional officers have to be paid overtime to take on the jobs of porters, administrators, maintenance workers, cooks and cleaners. The thousands of corporations who subsidize confinement by leasing prisoner labor for products and services lose their products and services, and withdraw their subsidies<sup>23</sup>. Wardens eventually have to bring in replacement workers, scabs. Either from work-release programs or on the private market. This is unsustainable, because however much a scab is paid, they cost far more than prisoners, who are paid pennies per hour, or nothing at all.

The power on the inside is not merely economic power, though. Prison is also where the Black Power movement was sent to die, and where it instead lives on. When the FBI used COINTELPRO<sup>24</sup> to destroy the Panthers, the Black Liberation Army and many other revolutionary organizations in a mix of frame-ups, sweeps, assassinations, and other brutally effective counterinsurgency measures, they surely intended to leave Black people defenseless, and they were largely successful. The survivors of COINTELPRO have either been trapped in prison for decades, or focused on working to free or support their aging incarcerated comrades<sup>25</sup>.

The heroes of the Black Power movement swing between desperate hopes and crushing despair, but they also continue to organize. The founders of FAM came up under the tutelage of a revolutionary prisoner from the COINTELPRO era who has been locked up since 1983 named Richard 'Mafundi' Lakei<sup>26</sup>. They, like

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23 See [How Prison Labor is the New American Slavery...](#) at ReturnToNow.net June 13, 2016 and [Insourcing: Identifying Businesses Involved in Prison Slavery...](#) by Bob Sloan for DailyKos.com Dec 14, 2010

24 Begin digging at [COINTELPRO Resources](#) from freedomarchives.org.

25 See [thejerichomovement.com](#)

26 See [Challenging Prisons: An Interview With FAM](#) by Devon Douglas-Bowers, Dec 15, 2015

white supremacy, except one thing. They have justice and right on their side. They have articulate and inspiring speakers. They have passion and the long but tragically slow arc of history behind them. The one thing Black Lives Matter needs is a crowbar. They need the means to back their passion for justice with the economic leverage to pry concessions out of the unjust system.

This is where Prisoner Resistance comes in. A state that controls primarily through ideology, legitimacy and spectacle is ironically weakest at the point where it is most physically repressive. The prison is where the white establishment most closely reproduces the plantation system. The phenomenon referred to as mass incarceration is not a mistake or an accident made by a misguided system, but rather a relatively conscious reproduction of the conditions of chattel slavery. In prison, the bodies of poor folks—disproportionately Black and Brown bodies—are forced to build and maintain the facilities that confine them. They are reduced to objects owned by their captors.

The Free Alabama Movement (FAM) has led the way in bringing public exposure to the fact of prison slavery. Their state wide work stoppages shook the Alabama Department of Corrections in 2014<sup>19</sup>, and again this spring<sup>20</sup>. They have participated—along with Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan<sup>21</sup> in Ohio—in spreading the word about a nationally coordinated prisoner workstoppage and protest to take place on September 9th<sup>22</sup>. When these protests expose prison labor as slavery, they also expose that prisoner-slaves like Harriet Tubman's escapees, are the vitally necessary property of their captors. Prisoners are subject to the

19 See [Exclusive: Inmates to strike in Alabama...](#) by Josh Eidelson in Salon.com, April 18, 2014 and [‘Let’s just shut down’: an interview with Spokesperson Ray...](#) by Annabelle Parker in The San Francisco Bay View, Dec 2, 2014

20 See [my interview with Kinetik Justice](#) on Truth-out.org, May 27, 2016 and [Prison Labor Strike in Alabama: “We Will No Longer Contribute to Our Own Oppression”](#) by Jack Denton for SolitaryWatch.com May 5, 2016.

21 See [We Kill Our Revolutionaries](#) by Chris Hedges for Truth-Out.org Feb 22, 2015 and [Siddique Abdullah Hasan Biography](#) at LucasvilleAmnesty.org

22 See [Forget Hunger Strikes. What Prisons Fear Most Are Labor Strikes](#) by Raven Rakia in Yes! Magazine June 7, 2016 and [‘Enough Is Enough’: Prisoners Across The Country...](#) Carimah Townes June 15, 2016

everything the cops do is terrorism. When the police aren't getting homicidally spooked and unloading a clip on innocent Black people, they are saturating Black neighborhoods, extorting money from people<sup>6</sup>, preying on acts of survival and trivial offenses<sup>7</sup>, kidnapping parents from their children, and then coming after the children<sup>8</sup>. The job of the criminal legal system, on a fundamental level<sup>9</sup> is to throw people into chains, torture them, and force them to work for nothing<sup>10</sup>.

Entire neighborhoods are blanketed with surveillance cameras, and broken windows policing strategies have cops coming down hard on the smallest of crimes, but only in those neighborhoods. Criminologists tell us that most common forms of crime like drug use, drunk driving and domestic violence are roughly evenly distributed across the racial geography, but the police focus on the Black community<sup>11</sup>. They saturate Black and Brown neighborhoods and operate with impunity because they have already branded all the residents as criminal in the public consciousness. The American people consent to such high levels of state violence and surveillance because the American ideology

6 “The police spend very little of their time dealing with violent criminals—indeed, police sociologists report that only about 10% of the average police officer’s time is devoted to criminal matters of any kind. Most of the remaining 90% is spent dealing with infractions of various administrative codes and regulations: all those rules about how and where one can eat, drink, smoke, sell, sit, walk, and drive.” David Graeber in [Ferguson and the Criminalization of American Life](#)

7 See, for example: [Useful or Not, Broken Windows Policing Remains Morally Indefensible](#) by Nick Malinowski for Huffington Post July 1, 2016

8 For a few examples see [Police Target Black Children](#) by Margaret Kimberley in the Black Agenda Report, [The Criminalization of Black Youth...](#) by Max Eternity for Truth-Out.org July 20, 2014 and The investigation into Lincoln Hills School for Boys in Northern Wisconsin, [Lincoln Hills probe focuses on sexual assault, abuse, misconduct](#) in The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Dec 10 2015.

9 See [Abolish Policing](#) on [CriticalResistance.org](#) and [Our Enemies in Blue](#) by Kristian Williams.

10 See [Let the Crops Rot in the Field](#) by the Free Alabama Movement for a prisoner’s analysis of this system.

11 “African Americans are not significantly more likely to use or sell prohibited drugs than whites, but they are made criminals at drastically higher rates for precisely the same conduct.” -Michelle Alexander, in *The New Jim Crow*

first insists that its victims deserve no better.

This is the second challenge Black Lives Matter faces. It is not only a movement of poor people unable to sell their bare lives to largely disinterested capitalists, it is also a movement of people who have been systematically dis-empowered, delegitimized, and dehumanized, people who have been prepped for disposal by the democratic government. Again, Black Lives Matter rises to the challenge, doing valiant battle and winning impressive gains against perhaps the most deeply entrenched and sophisticated form of oppression known to human history. They have taken protest and spectacle to new levels, and done so within a fickle hyper-saturated media environment. In our world of 24-hour news cycles and internet feeds, it is amazing how long the images and names Black Lives Matter repeats have persisted. This has got to be one of the most frustrating and emotionally fraught landscapes activism could take place in, and yet Black Lives Matter perseveres.

It perseveres, but does not win. Right now, it seems that Black Lives Matter is struggling to take the offense. It is a morally unacceptable tragedy that the list of remembered and shouted names continues to grow unabated, that all of Black Lives Matter's effort has failed to defend people from police killings. In comparison to the last time the Black community coordinated its efforts of autonomous self-defense, Black Lives Matter looks tragically weak. This is obvious in the very names of the movements. The Black Power movement raised their fists and said "all power to the people" but today's movement chants defensively: "hands up, don't shoot" pleading with the white establishment to recognize their their "lives matter." Aspirations for Black Power have been all but defeated and abandoned. Today, people need to agitate and fight for the mere right to exist, and even that minimal demand is still too radical for the white establishment. Meanwhile, the liberal politicians, Black and White, go on telling us that civil rights progress marches on, rather than backsliding.<sup>12</sup>

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12 See [Michelle Obama's Speech at the DNC](#), July 26, 2016

Within this ideological backdrop, even the spectacles of protest, whether they be freeway shut downs, precinct occupations, or burning convenience stores, inspire as much backlash as they do gains. Racist demagogues win presidential nominations<sup>13</sup> and gunmen open fire on Black protesters<sup>14</sup>. The establishment media has continuously demonized and degraded Black lives for so long that Black Lives Matter cannot possibly scrub themselves clean and assimilate, as much as some of them might hope to<sup>15</sup>. Black children have been turned into super-predators<sup>16</sup>, black mothers into welfare queens<sup>17</sup>, and black men into pimps and drug kingpins. Many inspiring, impassioned protesters, culture-makers and critics are fighting back against these stereotypes, but it is an unjustly difficult project<sup>18</sup>. No matter how peaceful and constitutionally protected a Black Lives Matter protest is, conservatives will use the word 'thug' to describe it. Establishment liberals, both Black and white, will police the language and caution against 'appearing violent.' This is how the ruling class responds when they aren't taking a threat seriously, when the movement lacks material leverage.

Black Lives Matter has everything it needs to win against

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- 13 See [DonaldJTrump.com](#) (or don't, because it will boost his brand)
  - 14 See [Bail Motion Denied for White Supremacist 4th Precinct Shooter](#) at [UnicornRiot.ninja](#) July 6, 2016
  - 15 "I, myself and other Black Lives Matter Minneapolis folks, were working to continuously channel people's energy into our nonviolent civil disobedience strategies, one of which is taking arrests... Part of the important thing to know is all of the folks who were arrested, as far as our folks on the highway, they sat down. They were arrested as part of our strategy." - Lena Gardner of BLM Minneapolis, quoted by [MPR](#) on July 11, 2016 and counter-narrative at "[Twin Cities Anarchist People of Color Engage Militancy Debate](#)" at [UnicornRiot.ninja](#) July 14, 2016.
  - 16 See [Why Hillary's Super-Predator Comment Matters](#) by Ronda Lee at [Huffington Post](#) April 11, 2016
  - 17 See [Ronald Reagan's "welfare queen" myth...](#) by Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer for [Salon.com](#) Sept 27, 2015,
  - 18 See [Black Lives Matter Activist Interrupts Hillary Clinton... Jesse Williams' Acceptance Speech](#) at [BET Awards 2016](#), [HELL YOU TALMBOUT](#) by Janelle Monae, [The Noise Came from Here](#) by Saul Williams, and countless others.